

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/236/20
3 March 2020

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. VLADIMIR ZHEGLOV,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1260th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

27 February 2020

On the sixth anniversary of the reunification of Crimea with Russia

Mr. Chairperson,

On 16 March 2014, a referendum was held in Crimea, as a result of which the vast majority of the peninsula's inhabitants voted for reunification with Russia. They remain firm supporters of that decision to this day. In a free and peaceful expression of will consistent with all international standards the people of Crimea legitimately exercised their right to self-determination. This right is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and confirmed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, and the CSCE Helsinki Final Act.

Essentially, the disagreement of the inhabitants of the Crimean peninsula with the nationalistic narrative of the Government of Ukraine was already made clear in 1991, when they voted in a referendum for the restoration of Crimea's autonomy within the USSR as an independent entity of the Soviet State, separate from Ukraine, which would maintain close ties with Russia. At that time, the opinion of the Crimeans was disregarded.

In early 2014, the violent, anti-constitutional coup d'état in Kyiv, the subsequent threats by the Maidan authorities to deprive the majority of the peninsula's inhabitants of the right to use their native language and intimidation by nationalists induced Crimeans to take determined action in favour of speedy reunification with Russia.

The most vivid example of the danger that loomed over the inhabitants of the peninsula is the so-called "Friendship Train" with nationalists from the Right Sector, which left for Crimea on 27 February 2014 from riot-torn Kyiv. The stirred-up youths certainly did not set out with peaceful intentions. They were carrying weapons and incendiary devices, and direct threats were heard from their leaders about their intention to massacre dissenters. The population had a choice: to become victims of the nationalists or to take the peninsula's fate into their own hands. Logically, the people chose a peaceful future. And at that moment, Crimea and its inhabitants, like a "collective refugee", took a historic decision to escape repression. Among other things, this helped them avoid the bloody scenario that was in store for Donbas or, for example, Odessa.

Attempts to dispute the conscious and long-held choice of the Crimeans to return to Russia is a sign of disrespect for the will of the people to have sovereignty over their own territory. This borders on a negation of one of the basic international norms subscribed to by every United Nations Member State.

A number of countries have taken absurd and inhumane steps aimed at “collective punishment” of the inhabitants of Crimea for their genuinely democratic decision. This does not tally well with the principles of international law. The illegitimate unilateral sanctions by the United States of America, the European Union and Canada are an instrument for punishing Crimeans for their disagreement with the outcome of the coup d’état in Ukraine in February 2014. Riding on the back of this, the Ukrainian authorities went even further by imposing a water, economic and transport blockade of the peninsula. Crimea has held its ground, but six years later the Ukrainian authorities continue to exploit the subject of its water supply.

One last thing. The fiction voiced by some colleagues about the deplorable situation in Russian Crimea has nothing to do with the reality of the situation there. The situation on the peninsula is changing for the better in all spheres: socio-economic, infrastructure, politics, human rights and others. This can be confirmed by the inhabitants of the peninsula itself, as well as by the foreign journalists and parliamentarians from foreign countries who have visited it. Anyone present in this room can see the positive dynamic of change for themselves. Crimea is steadily developing and moving forward. We will have the opportunity to talk about this in greater detail a little later.

Thank you for your attention.